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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [FR](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH MFA PUBLICLY ENDORSES THE PRINCIPLE OF UN
SUPERVISION FOR SHAB'A FARMS

REF: PARIS 1317

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reasons 1.4. (b), (d).

¶1. (U) French MFA spokesperson Eric Chevallier told reporters July 15 that France supported in principle the option of placing the disputed Shab'a Farms territory in southern Lebanon under UN supervision. The context of his exchange with reporters leading to this subject is unclear from the transcript, but Chevallier indicated that French FM Kouchner and UNSYG Ban Ki Moon discussed the matter when they met on the margins of the July 13 Paris summit on the Mediterranean. Chevallier sidestepped a question as to whether Shab'a Farms came up during French President Sarkozy's meeting with Syrian President Asad and whether Asad agreed. Instead, Chevallier restated French support of the concept "in principle" and the necessity of studying the "modalities" of implementing such an idea. An AFP report, but not the MFA official transcript, quoted Chevallier as saying he would not go any further on the subject.

¶2. (C) Earlier that day, NEA adviser at the presidency Boris Boillon told us that the only discussion of Shab'a Farms involving Sarkozy came in the one-on-one with Lebanese President Sleiman, who raised it as a follow-up to the early June meeting the two men had in Beirut. Sarkozy was non-committal, according to Boillon, reflecting the Elysee's view that Israeli objections to dealing with Shab'a Farms made doing anything for the moment a "non-starter." As he had declined to do when he visited Israel last month, Sarkozy did not raise it with Israeli PM Olmert. Boillon speculated that the Quai might be trying to keep the issue alive. If that was happening, Boillon affirmed, it would not be as the result of a decision coordinated with the Elysee.

¶3. (C) MFA DAS-equivalent for the Levant Ludovic Pouille later on July 15 claimed not to have seen a report on Kouchner's meeting with Ban Ki Moon and thus to have been out of the loop regarding any discussion of Shab'a Farms. He denied that any side meetings occurred with Israel or other interested governments dealing with the subject. Pouille underscored, however, the MFA's -- and Kouchner's -- attachment to the idea of helping the Lebanese government deprive Hizballah of the pretext Israel's occupation of Shab'a Farms provides it to hold onto its weapons.

¶4. (C) Comment: We are not sure how best to interpret the latest public mention of Shab'a Farms. It may have been intended as a low-cost, low-visibility way pending adoption of a possible PRST in New York related to UNSCR 1701 of signaling to Sleiman and Lebanese PM Siniora that France supports their desire at least to consider the UN supervision option for the territory. Whatever the reality, we note that this episode seemed one of a recent series in which the

Elysee confirmed that the Quai has been staking out policy lines on NEA issues that exceed the bounds of what the Elysee deems prudent. Septel will deal with the Elysee's disquiet over Kouchner's latest push for a more activist role in the Israeli/Palestinian peace negotiations. End comment

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